

I voted no. Let me tell you why. Because it was a protest vote meant to encourage freedom and liberty for all Americans. Let us start with what it said.

H.R. 193 is a resolution that says in part, "expressing support to the organizers and participants of the historic meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba on 20 May 2005 in Havana. Whereas, Fidel Castro's terrorist regime has continued to repress all attempts by Cuban people to bring democratic change to Cuba and denies universally recognized liberties, including freedom of speech, association, movement and the press."

I could go on but there is no need to. It is all right there in what I just read. We deny liberties denied Cubans while a Cuban-American in my city of Seattle is denied the right to go to Cuba to visit his son by the U.S. government.

Remember the grandstanding on Elian Gonzales? We wag our fingers at Fidel and shout about Cubans being denied liberty at every moment. Well, we are denying the right of an American to travel to Cuba for a few days to see his son. How hypocritical is that?

I am talking about the plight of Sergeant Carlos Lazo. He came to America from Cuba in the early 1990s floating on a raft in the ocean. He risked his life for a chance to come here. Talk about the quintessential story about risking everything to call America home. Carlos Lazo is the stuff of books and movies and news coverage. He wants none of it. He just wants to see his children in Cuba. And the United States government will not let him go.

Floating on the raft in the ocean, that is what Carlos Lazo did. That is about as courageous as it gets. So he arrives in America. He moves to the State of Washington. A man grateful to be alive, he determines to embrace his new country and do everything within his power to give back. He joins the Washington National Guard. Over a year ago, his unit dispatched to Iraq. Now Carlos serves his country in one of the most dangerous places in Iraq, Fallujah, as a medic. He serves on the ground in Iraq for a year.

When his duty is over, Carlos wants to go see his kids still in Cuba. Carlos goes to Miami, but he is denied the right to travel to Cuba. He is denied the right to board an airplane bound for Havana. He saw them in 2003, and he is told by the government: You cannot see them again until 2006. Three years.

Sergeant Lazo, who proudly served America, who risked his life to get here and risked his life to defend liberty, is now a man whose liberty has been denied. He cannot see his children in Cuba until the President lets him go.

When will Carlos be able to visit his children in Cuba? I ask that the Speaker, because the administration is in denial, call the White House. They want to perpetuate a bureaucracy and a failed policy, not assist an American

who wants the sum total of what every parent wants, the right to see their kids.

The government has in place a policy which denies the basic liberties of an American hero, and we have not lifted one finger in this House to help Carlos Lazo. The Secretary of Defense is not interested in him. The White House is not interested in its citizen. The White House and this House are only interested in wagging fingers at Fidel Castro.

Carlos Lazo is a man who embodies everything Americans stand for, courage, determination, quiet thanks from a man grateful to have made a new life and a new home. And now Carlos is a man who cannot be united with his family. Carlos is a man who did not want to be anything but a quiet, grateful American and is forced to become a man in the spotlight, hoping someone will pay attention, hoping someone will let him see his kids.

H. Res. 193 is a suspension bill that would have us suspend disbelief. Carlos deserves the thanks of a grateful Nation and the immediate assistance of this administration and the Congress. We ought to add his name to H. Res. 193 so he can travel. We should do that and make a resolve that the United States of America, which sees itself as a beacon of liberty in the world, extend its support to Carlos Lazo and will facilitate his immediate travel to Cuba to be reunited with his kids.

Anything less than fighting and defending the liberty of Carlos Lazo from the State of Washington is the work of a Congress long on hyperbole and short on action in defense of liberty.

Mr. Speaker, call the Secretary of Defense before the day is out. I bet he is still in his office. Send Carlos Lazo to Cuba, to his sons in his former homeland, so he can be a free American.

If you want to make a real statement about what it means to be free, let one American be free, free to travel, free to be reunited with his children, free to show the people of Cuba, firsthand, what freedom means in this country.

Free to show Cubans firsthand that America does not have to prevent its citizens from leaving the country in order to keep them.

Mr. Speaker, use your office to intercede and let this House stand as a beacon of freedom and liberty for every American, not just some Americans.

So long as Carlos Lazo is forbidden from visiting his children in Cuba, America can only be known as the land where some are truly free and others are truly denied liberty.

Send Carlos Lazo to Cuba.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### SUPPORTING LT. PANTANO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have spoken at great lengths now about Second Lieutenant Ilario Pantano, a Marine who served our Nation bravely in both Gulf Wars and who now stands accused of murder for defending himself and this country.

Lt. Pantano's article 32 hearing ended 2 weeks ago, and now the investigating officer in the case, Major Mark Winn, is set to make his recommendation on the case to the Second Marine Division Commander, General Richard Huck, by Friday.

I stand here today to represent the thousands of people who have joined in my hope and prayers that, on Friday, Major Winn will recommend that all charges be dropped against Lt. Pantano.

Based on the facts of the case, the man who brought forth the allegations, Sergeant Coburn, is someone who did not see the shooting and who waited 2½ months to report the incident. I am convinced that this lieutenant should and will be exonerated of all charges.

I know that, during the hearing, both his Marine and civilian attorneys did an excellent job of proving the innocence of Lt. Pantano, and I have the utmost confidence in the system that the truth will prevail.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly believe that Lt. Pantano was doing his job when he found himself in an unfortunate situation where he needed to defend himself and his platoon members against the enemy.

Having met and interacted with Lt. Pantano and his family over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to get to know them well. I am certain that the man I have come to know is not a murderer. He is a dedicated Marine who loves his Corps, his country and his family.

Mr. Speaker, I put in a resolution, House Resolution 167, to support Lt. Pantano as he faces trial. I continue to urge my colleagues in the House to take some time to read my resolution and look into this situation for themselves.

Lt. Pantano's mother also has a website that I encourage people to visit. The address is [www.defendthedefenders.org](http://www.defendthedefenders.org). I would like to repeat that, [www.defendthedefenders.org](http://www.defendthedefenders.org).

Mr. Speaker, I close once again by asking that we do not send the wrong message to our men and women in uniform and cause them to second guess their decisions. I fear that instilling doubt into the minds of our Nation's defenders places their lives and the security of our Nation in jeopardy.

Mr. Speaker, I close by asking God to please bless Lt. Pantano and his family, and hopefully, on Friday, this decision will be to exonerate this wonderful lieutenant who loves his country. I also ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform and their families. I close by asking God to please bless America.